

Minutes of Meeting
of Members of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission

March 28, 2011

A meeting of seven members of the Sentencing Commission was held at 2:00 PM on Monday, March 28, 2011, at the Superior Court, 20 Franklin Square, New Britain. Members in attendance were Honorable Patrick L. Carroll, Maureen Price-Boreland, Peter M. Gioia, David Shepack, Thomas J. Ullmann, Robert Farr, Michael Lawlor and Honorable Joseph M. Shortall, chair of the Commission. Also in attendance was Andrew J. Clark, director of the Institute of Municipal and Regional Policy at CCSU.

Judge Shortall had provided an agenda in advance, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. A list of the tasks assigned to the Commission by P.A. 10-129 was distributed to the members in attendance, and a copy of that list is also attached to these minutes.

On the agenda item concerning a process for eliciting from Commission members their respective priorities among the Commission's many statutory tasks, it was suggested that a focus group process be used at a meeting of the Commission in the near future for that purpose.

Suggestions of projects the Commission might address with a view toward making proposals to the 2012 General Assembly included: codification of the many unclassified criminal statutes to provide consistency in the sentencing structure, a mechanism for allowing a juvenile who receives a lengthy sentence after transfer to adult court to seek modification of that sentence upon a showing of rehabilitation while incarcerated and the use of "school zone" drug statutes and their unintended consequences.

On the topic of funding for staffing the Commission, it was reported that funding does not appear to be available from the Vera Institute, and an approach has been made to the Pew Charitable Trust for general guidance on what funds it might have to support the Commission's work. It was suggested that a list of possible funding sources within the state be compiled. Members agreed that funding and free assistance from the business community might be more readily forthcoming for specific projects than general staffing.

There was also discussion of the possible availability of funding from the Justice Reinvestment grant being pursued by the Governor's Office, as well as funding through the Washington state Institute for Public Policy to do cost-benefit analysis of sentencing policies.

Other business discussed related to the need to educate Commission members on the sentencing statutes in Connecticut and the work of sentencing commissions in other states as a way to help them identify the Commission's focus and to form subcommittees on specific topics.

Two potential research projects were described by Commission members present. One would gather information on just who is in prison on a given day and for what reasons, as well as something about their personal and criminal histories. In effect, this would give the Commission a "snapshot" of the prison population and inform its decisions about how to undertake its statutory tasks. Research into the criminal records of persistent offenders was also suggested, with a view toward determining when the criminal justice system might have intervened to prevent further criminal conduct.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Joseph M. Shortall
Judge Trial Referee

